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Several infrastructure projects planned for Bluffs this summer

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Staff photo/Cindy Christensen - Construction crews work to move dirt and broken cement to clear a path for a new access road for residents on North Broadway Friday morning.

Get the shovels ready.

Now that the economic stimulus bill has been signed by President Barack Obama, money is starting to filter down to the states, including the Iowa Department of Transportation for infrastructure projects.

Council Bluffs has two projects lined up, hoping for approval for funding.

"We're applying for \$3 million," said City Engineer Ron Neal. "We're right in the middle of the process."

One of the projects the Public Works department is seeking federal funds for involves patching a portion of heavily traveled South 35th Street between Nebraska Avenue and 23rd Avenue.

"We've observed cracking in the concrete," Neal said.

The other project would involve rebuilding the stretch of College Road from Valley View to U.S. Highway 6.

"Right now, it's a narrow two-lane road," Neal said.

The plans call for a three-lane road, including a separate lane for left turns, and, if money is available, a bike path, he said.

Some concerns have been voiced about whether stimulus money for infrastructure projects like this will create long-term jobs.

Neal seems to think it would.

"It helps bring in new businesses and development. It certainly can't hurt," he said. "This could be an important project. It will enhance the area for development."

The city is seeking \$2.5 million from the stimulus bill for that project, Neal said.

Another project in that general area would provide a more direct route going north and south near the Iowa Western Community College and could be have an impact for future development, Neal added.

Iowa Highway 191 currently ends at Highway 6, or Kanesville Boulevard. This means that motorists, wanting to continue traveling south, for example, must sidetrack over to College Road or Interstate 80 to find a connection. That will change.

Highway 191 would be extended south, just east of K-Mart, down to the southern end of College Road. From

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there, motorists would drive across Mosquito Creek and hook up with the new Valley View Drive connection to continue on.

"It's going to be a nice straight shot," Neal said. "And, it will allow for reduced fuel usage and reduced pollution."

Estimated cost for that work is \$3 million.

It's going to be another busy year for the Public Works Department for road and sewer work.

One of the key projects will be the fourth phase of repair on South 13th Street between 19th and 22nd avenues that will involve installation of a new sanitary sewer and new pavement. The third phase of reconstruction of North 31st Street is also on the calendar. This will involve a new sanitary sewer and pavement between avenues A and D.

"Both are \$1 million projects funded by the city's penny sales tax," Neal said.

Another project should really help residents in the southwest part of the city who have experienced flooded basements. It's a new sanitary sewer installation on South 32nd Street between 11th and 14th avenues.

"The existing one is in poor conditions and the backup has been associated with that," Neal said. "This should help a lot. This will be a larger sewer with more capacity."

Estimated cost for that project is \$1 million in local sales tax revenues, also.

New infrastructure will also occur cross town in what Neal referred to as the lower Bennett Avenue, just downhill from Abraham Lincoln High School.

"It's east of Bennett, south of McPherson Avenue and north of Mall Drive," he said. "Part of the area doesn't have an adequate storm sewer and we will add that and sanitary sewer where needed and new pavement. It's a multi-year project. It will really improve the area. The streets are rough in some spots."

Not all infrastructure has to be totally rebuilt.

A project on South 16th Street between 16th and 28th avenues will involve what's called sewer lining. Neal described the procedure like putting a hand into a sock and pushing it through the pipe. The sock lines the inside of the old pipe and is cured using hot water, resulting in a hardened plastic pipe liner.

"The sewer is still in good enough shape to clean it and line it," he said. "It's a way where we can replace sanitary sewers without having to tear up streets or yards."

Work will also continue on reshaping Broadway between First and Second streets.

"The Broadway streetscape will be completed in two phases," Neal said. "The first phase consists of replacing the intersection of Second and Broadway, the north side walkway and the First Street and Broadway intersection. This work will be completed this year. Phase II will replace the street and south sidewalk in 2010."

Altogether, about \$26.2 million will be spent this year to improve city streets and sewers. Of that amount, \$8 million will come from sales tax revenue and \$7 million from general obligation bonds. Other sources include \$3 million from the federal government and \$1.5 million from the state.

"It's going to be a very busy year," Neal said. "We'll have our hands full."



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